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## SINGING AROUND THE GOLDEN CALF

Once upon a time a great leader came down from a mountain bearing under his arm a code of noble morality. He had left his people serious and intent upon service to their God. As he approached their camp he heard a commotion.

"It is the sound of war," cried the commander-in-chief of his armies.

The old leader listened. His ear was more discriminating.

"It is not the sound of those who conquer. It is not the sound of those who are overcome. It is the sound of singing which I hear," said he.

A few hours later Moses was convincing his people that a moment of spiritual and political crisis is not a moment for festivals, dances, and songs to strange gods.



Like so many of the passages of the Old Testament, these words of Moses are particularly applicable to our day. The church of Jesus Christ is indeed in a period of crisis. Its leaders may not have gone into the mountain of God, but too many of its members—including many an Aaron and Miriam—are dancing about the golden calf. And the dance of prosperity is deadly. The songs of prosperity are raucous.

Respectability is not holiness. Absence of war is not always peace. The silence of prophets is not invariably testimony to holiness. The song of a church that neither wins nor loses is a ragtime parody on the psalms of David.

Religion is a serious thing, and never more so than in a day like ours when an entire world is rejudging its spiritual beliefs. It need not be morose or pietistic, but it ought at least to be in deadly

earnest. A church that has no revivals, religious leaders who care nothing about conversions, are spiritual liabilities.

Amusements may be necessary, but they are not means of grace. Entertaining children is not making them into children of God. A church devoted to sociability is not of necessity devoted to moral idealism. Afternoon teas in the interest of getting Christians acquainted and rewarding them for attendance at prayer meeting are not the birthplaces of apostles and martyrs.

You cannot warm religion into heroism on kitchenettes in church parlors.



Only the perverse will misunderstand these words as inveighing against community activity on the part of churches. Such service is legitimate and imperative wherever it is needed. Sociability is a duty of every church. But it is not the fundamental mission of the church. The real mission of the church is to bring God to man, to champion spirituality, to nerve men to combat temptation, to stir them to social service in the name of Christian love, to teach them that no idealism can be reconstructive that promises no sacrifice, and above all to bring them into saving fellowship with a God of Law as truly as of Love.

We want to see the church victorious, but a church defeated in its effort to champion the gospel and vanquish evil is better than a church that never wins nor loses, but, while its leaders seek to bring them the word of God Almighty, sings around a golden calf.